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ON PAGE C7THE WASHINGTON POST  
11 May 1980*Jack Anderson*

# The 'China Opening'

When Henry Kissinger wrote his memoirs, "The White House Years," he never expected that some of the secret documents he used would be made public. After all, he had fought all the way to the Supreme Court against attempts to make his state papers available to the press—and had won.

But one document has leaked out. Only nine copies reportedly exist, but my associate Dale Van Atta pried one of them loose. It raises questions as to the former secretary's use of the confidential documents at his disposal.

The episode involves the famous "opening" to the People's Republic of China announced in February 1972. Though denounced by a minority of critics as an infamous "sellout" of the nationalist Chinese on Taiwan, the agreement with the communists gave Richard Nixon political mileage in his reelection campaign that year.

As described by Kissinger in his memoirs, the historic turnaround in U.S.-China relations was a triumph of personal diplomacy. Details have been told of how Kissinger stayed up late for several nights on his secret trips to mainland China, hammering out the text of the so-called Shanghai Communiqué released on Feb. 27, 1972.

In the Shanghai Communiqué, the United States "affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan." The joint communiqué added: "In the meantime [the United States] will progressively reduce its forces and military

installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes."

The China "opening" gave Nixon an election-year aura of foreign-policy expertise and the stature of a man of peace. It also enhanced the reputation of Henry Kissinger; within a year, he was secretary of state.

What Kissinger ignores, and the secret document makes clear, is that the historic "break-through" embodied in the Shanghai Communiqué had actually been achieved two years earlier at secret meetings between U.S. and Chinese communist representatives in Warsaw.

These earlier concessions on Taiwan, though orchestrated by Nixon and Kissinger, were arranged by the U.S. ambassador to Poland, Walter Stoessel, and a middle-echelon State Department official. Kissinger was not present.

Perhaps for this reason, Kissinger plays down the Warsaw meetings in his memoirs, and relegates the all-important Taiwan issue to a one-word inclusion in "the litany of bilateral issues."

Yet the secret document shows how crucial the Taiwan question was to the Chinese Communists at the Warsaw meetings. In the very first session on Jan. 20, 1970, the Chinese emissary, Charge d'Affaires Lei Yang, complained to Stoessel at great length that in an informal conversation two weeks earlier the U.S. ambassador had "failed to mention a single word about Taiwan."

The Chinese negotiator continued: "We must point out that there have long existed serious disputes between China and the United States,

and that the crux of these lies in the question of Taiwan."

The Red Chinese position is "firm and unswerving," Lei declared. The same could not be said of the U.S. position. Nixon and Kissinger had already decided to give the Chinese what they demanded. After paying lip service to U.S. opposition to an armed attack on Taiwan, Stoessel replied:

"The limited United States military presence on Taiwan is not a threat to the security of your government, and it is our hope that as peace and stability in Asia grow, we can reduce those facilities on Taiwan that we now have."

The tilt toward the People's Republic of China and the abandonment of Taiwan had begun. Peiking was quick to take the hint.

At the next Warsaw meeting on Feb. 20, 1970, Lei reiterated that Taiwan "is the single most complicated problem in the relations between [our] two countries."

Stoessel's response, stating the U.S. position "as clearly and frankly as possible," was: "It is my government's position that the question of Taiwan . . . is one to be resolved by those directly involved . . . We do not intend to interfere in any peaceful settlement . . . It is my government's intention to reduce those military facilities which we now have on Taiwan as tensions in the area diminish."

Two years later, Kissinger supposedly burned the midnight oil in Shanghai to arrive at this identical agreement.

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